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Hello Rep. Lawlor, Sen. McDonald and members of the Judiciary Committee,

First I would like to express my deepest thanks for your time and your commitment to the state of Connecticut. A lot of good has been done in the past years; but there is always room for improvement. In a time of economic crisis, the need to consider alternative, money saving options is more prevalent now than ever. I am here to support House Bill 349-An Act Concerning the Possession of a Small Amount of Marijuana.

Right now, The University of Connecticut alone is facing huge budget cuts. All of you are going to be feeling the pressure of balancing the budget for the state of Connecticut as well. We are **all** feeling the effects of this budget crisis. The need for extra funds is dire and if a plausible, sensible solution presents itself to relieve us from these burdens, it needs to be **seriously** considered. I urge all of you today to set aside biases and stigmas in considering our discussion on the decriminalization of marijuana.

Since 1973, 22 states have passed some form of marijuana decriminalization. Massachusetts is the most recent state to be added to this list.

The taxes and fines imposed on those who do get caught would generate an immense amount of new revenue for the state. Here are immediate benefits that could be explored:

- Decrim would free up funds to investigate other unsolved cases. On the University of Connecticut campus, for example, you can open the Police Blotter on any given day and see five to ten people arrested for possession of marijuana. Stolen laptops, ipods, and the blatant, frequent sexual harassment issues seem to take a back seat to "catching" drug users.

- This money could be used to increase transportation to jobs, addiction services and educational facilities (not to mention increased Drug related education that is not the abstinence only DARE we are so familiar with).

Two years ago, a bill legalizing medical marijuana was vetoed by Governor Rell. She stated that if she allowed medical marijuana to be legalized, it would send a bad message to children. Marijuana, like other drugs, is not for kids. There are hundreds of other activities in our society that we permit adults to do, but forbid children, such as skydiving, signing contracts, drinking alcohol and smoking tobacco. We do not arrest adults who responsibly engage in these activities in order to discourage children from doing so. Nor can we justify arresting adult marijuana smokers on the grounds of sending a message to children. Arrests are causing these parents to be **taken away** from their children. We don't arrest adults for drinking alcohol, why would we arrest them for doing something that is statistically safer and far less addicting?

Marijuana decriminalization is not a new or radical idea. It has been successfully implemented in many other areas of our great nation. We need to seriously consider decriminalization as a means of saving our state millions.